News release

Spring ahead

4 March 2005

March 21 is traditionally the first day of spring. However, in the UK, the three months from December through to February are generally when true winter weather is most likely to affect the country.

So what was Winter 2004-05 like?

On the whole, the season for the UK was mild and slightly drier than average, although regional variations were large, with Scotland having 126% of its average winter rainfall. The mean temperature was around 1.5 °C above average, even though we've just seen a cold and snowy second half of February. December and January saw some notable stormy spells, especially around 7 and 8 January, when prolonged heavy rain caused the severe flooding in Carlisle, but the main theme was of mild weather with reports of flowers, bees and frogspawn appearing very early.

Some highlights of the winter months

December: After a quiet start, December turned very unsettled with storms affecting many parts of the country through the middle part of the month. Winds gusted to around 80 m.p.h. in some areas along the south coast of England, however, a return to colder conditions followed, with frosts and snow around Christmas.

January: The new year started wet and very windy but mild, with the temperature reaching 13 °C in the south-west of England. A very stormy spell of weather affected the country from 4 to 12 January, with strong winds and heavy rain for many areas. On 7 January, 5 to 6 inches of rain fell in 24 hours across north Wales and northern England, causing extensive flooding in some areas such as Carlisle, and the wind gusted to over 90 m.p.h. in exposed western parts. After another spell of very stormy weather around the 11/12th, parts of Scotland saw exceptionally high winds (106 m.p.h. at Barra) and the highest average wave height ever recorded across the Met Office ocean buoy network (15.7 m) was measured to the west of Scotland. The month ended on a quieter note as a large area of high pressure built to the west of the UK, but not before a cold snap had delivered 5-10 cm of snow across Northern Ireland on the 17th.

February: There was quiet weather at first for much of the country with Cardiff recording 14 °C on the 1st, and on the night of 11/12th London had a minimum temperature of 11.9 °C - one of its mildest February nights on record. The weather then turned unsettled for several days as depressions ran across the country before things turned much colder around the 18th as a blast of Arctic winds chilled the country and brought snow to many areas. The cold snap lasted to the end of the month as the weather patterns continued to bring the risk of snow to many parts of the UK.

More details about winter 2004/2005

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